

Message Text

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ORIGIN ARA-14

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TO AMEMBASSY ASUNCION IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 176672

FOR THE AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SHUM, PINT, PA

SUBJECT: LAINO CASE: REPRESENTATIONS TO LOPEZ ESCOBAR

REF: STATE 175686

1. DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY MCNEIL CALLED IN AMBASSADOR LOPEZ ESCOBAR WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON TO REVIEW INSTRUCTIONS REFTEL DEPLORING PARAGUAYAN ACTIONS IN LAINO CASE.

2. LOPEZ ESCOBAR TOOK INITIATIVE IN DISCUSSION IN OBVIOUS EFFORT TO DEFUSE REPRESENTATIONS WHICH HE CLEARLY ASSUMED MCNEIL WAS ABOUT TO MAKE. HE LAMENTED GOP ACTIONS AGAINST LAINO, PARTICULARLY IN LIGHT OF IMPROVEMENTS THAT HAD RECENTLY BEEN MADE IN HUMAN RIGHTS PICTURE IN PARAGUAY, AND SAID THERE WERE TWO CAMPS IN THE GOP TODAY: THOSE WHO WISHED TO TAKE A POSITIVE APPROACH AND THE HARD-LINERS. HE SAID HE HAD TOLD NOGUES THAT HE WAS DEEPLY CONCERNED WITH
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THE EFFECT THE LAINO AFFAIR WOULD HAVE ON BILATERAL RELATIONS AND ASKED HIM WHAT HE COULD SAY TO THE USG. NOGUES HAD REPLIED THAT HE WAS IN CONSTANT CONTACT WITH AMBASSADOR WHITE AND TOLD LOPEZ ESCOBAR ABOUT THE PENDING LEGAL PROCESS.

3. MCNEIL TOLD THE AMBASSADOR THAT WHEN YOU WERE HERE YOU

HAD POINTED TO IMPROVEMENTS IN PARAGUAY ALTHOUGH THE CLOUD OF IAHRC NON-VISIT REMAINED A PROBLEM. NOW, HOWEVER, THE LAINO AFFAIR HAD COME AS A COLD BATH. THE STRANGE CIRCUMSTANCES OF LAINO'S DETENTION AND THE REFUSAL OF THE POLICE TO ACKNOWLEDGE HIS DETENTION FURTHER EXACERBATED THE AFFAIR. MOREOVER, IN THE MIND OF SOME IT WAS VIEWED AS A DELIBERATE RESPONSE TO THE U.S., COMING AS IT DID ONE DAY AFTER LAINO'S RETURN. WHAT CAN BE DONE NOW, HE ASKED, TO RESOLVE THIS MATTER AS IT CANNOT FAIL TO CALL INTO QUESTION OUR COOPERATIVE RELATIONSHIP. MCNEIL EMPHASIZED THAT WE ARE IN CONSTANT CONTACT WITH YOU AND THAT YOU WERE ACTING UNDER INSTRUCTIONS.

4. LOPEZ ESCOBAR SAID HE WAS IN FULL AGREEMENT WITH WHAT WE SAID ABOUT THE CASE EXCEPT THAT THERE WAS CERTAINLY NO INTENT TO INSULT THE U.S. HE CLAIMED THAT WHEN HE RECENTLY SAW STROESSNER, IN ADDITION TO AGAIN RECOMMENDING THE IAHRC VISIT, HE ALSO TOLD STROESSNER THAT LAINO'S ACTIVITIES IN THE U.S. SHOULD BE IGNORED. HE LEFT THE MEETING, HE SAID, IN THE BELIEF STROESSNER WAS IN AGREEMENT, BUT IN THE PRESIDENT'S WAITING ROOM GROUPS OF COLORADO PARTY CONGRESSMEN WERE AGITATING TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT LAINO. HE INTIMATED THAT THEY GOT TO STROESSNER BUT LOPEZ ESCOBAR ALSO SAID LATER HE THOUGHT THE AFFAIR WAS AN UNSANCTIONED EFFORT BY THE POLICE TO INGRATiate THEMSELVES WITH STROESSNER.
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5. LOPEZ ESCOBAR THEN ASKED FOR A PIECE OF PAPER SPECIFICALLY DIRECTED TO HIM (NOT OUR PRESS STATEMENT) STATING OUR POSITION SO THAT HE COULD SEND THE TEXT TO HIS GOVERNMENT. HE ALSO ASKED THAT IT BE "ENERGETIC". NOGUES, HE ADDED, WAS A LITTLE ISOLATED AND DID NOT HAVE THE ACCESS TO STROESSNER THAT SOME POLITICIANS ENJOYED AND A TEXT WOULD BE HELPFUL. WE ARE GIVING HIM AN AIDE MEMOIRE.

6. MCNEIL THEN ASKED LOPEZ ESCOBAR TO PHONE NOGUES TO TELL HIM ABOUT THE CONVERSATION AND THAT A TEXT OF THE U.S. POSITION WOULD BE SENT THURSDAY. THE AMBASSADOR AGREED BUT WE HAVE DOUBTS HE WILL ACTUALLY DO SO. HOWEVER, HE SPECULATED WHETHER IT WOULD BE BEST TO CARRY OUR STATEMENT PERSONALLY TO ASUNCION.

7. IN CONCLUSION, MCNEIL EMPHASIZED THAT IF LAINO IS KEPT IN JAIL, OUR PROBLEMS WILL NOT GO AWAY. MOREOVER, THERE IS A GOOD POSSIBILITY THAT SOME EUROPEAN COUNTRIES WILL ALSO WEIGH IN. OUR DESIRE IS FOR THE PARAGUAYANS TO GET THE LAINO CASE SATISFACTORILY RESOLVED SO THAT THIS AFFAIR MAY BE SEEN AS AN ABERRATION. THE HANDLING OF THE CASE BY

THE GOP HAS MADE IT A HUMAN RIGHTS CASE AND A POLITICAL
PROBLEM. THE ONLY PRACTICAL SOLUTION WOULD SEEM TO BE TO

RELEASE LAINO NOW AND LEAVE THE LEGAL CASE FOR LATER
DETERMINATION. CHRISTOPHER

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